FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
5-337-C	ORLEANS		EAS.109

Town/City: Town of Eastham

Place: *(neighborhood or village)*:
North Eastham

Address: 435 Aspinet Road

Historic Name: Elkanah & Jerusha Cobb House

Uses: Present: single-family residence

Original: single-family residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1781 and 1823

Source: deeds, vital and probate records, censuses

Style/Form: Greek Revival/crosswing

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:
Foundation: brick

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard & wood shingle/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Studio, late 20th c.
3-car garage, late 20th c.
Cottage, mid 20th c.
Garden shed, late 20th c.

Major Alterations *(with dates)*:
Shed dormers added on N, E & W sides, 20th c.
Sunporch created in rear of wing, late-20th c.
Deck added to front, late 20th c.
Window sash replaced

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 2.408

Setting: The property is situated on an early rural road now in the midst of small lots on new roads with houses built in the mid- to late-20th century.

Photograph

View from west.

Locus Map (north at top)

Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson
Larson Fisher Associates

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date: June 2020

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Elkanah & Jerusha Cobb House was built in two sections, one dated in ca. 1781 to correspond with the Cobbs' marriage, which appears to be the cross wing attached to the south side of an end house documented as having been constructed in 1823. (Although the front of the house is aligned north-south, documents refer to a "dwelling house built in the year 1823, adjoining the old house on the West.") Both sections are a story-and-a-half in height. The presumed 1823 section presents a three-bay front façade on the west with an entrance in a trabeated architrave on the south side; three windows are evenly spaced in the upper story. The façade is framed by corner pilasters and a Classical pediment with short returns in the gable, indicating that design features were updated in the Greek Revival taste. Later in the 1800s a scalloped vergeboard was added to the raking edge of the gable. The dimensions and massing of the section reflect an interior side-hall plan, two rooms deep with a central chimney. There is a window for each room on the north side of the section, which appear original, but only in the rear (east) suggesting alterations to it, probably removing a doorway, were made later. The rear end is trimmed in the same manner as the front.

The story-and-a-half wing is presumed to have been the 18th-century dwelling; an interior inspection is needed to confirm it. Its four-bay front façade is in line with the front of the end house and contains an off-center trebeated entrance of its own. It may have originated with a narrower plan that was bumped out in the rear, such as indicated on a 1948 site plan (Fig.1) and Greek Revival-style trim added. Currently, the rear of the plan contains a large sunporch tucked under the roof with window groups on the east and south sides in what seems to be a late 20th century adaptation based on the window design. Shed dormers have been added to the roofs on the north side of the end house and both sides of the wing.

The house is situated on a flag lot set back from Aspinet Road with two lots subdivided on the street frontage. In the vicinity are four outbuildings: a studio recently built, one-story, wood frame, gable roof form with wood shingle siding, a chimney on the north end and single door in the south end; a one-story, wood frame three-car garage of recent construction with a gable roof and wood shingle siding that has replaced or may incorporate an earlier barn; a small wood frame cottage built in the mid-20th century and recently renovated; and a garden shed. The buildings are sited amid an open lawn and gardens at the south end of a driveway leading from the street. The rear of the property is wooded.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The house at 435 Aspinet Road combines an early structure and another that, according to an 1833 will and an 1840 deed, was built in 1823 attached to the "old house." Though deeds for this period of Eastham's history have not survived, the original part of the dwelling was probably built between 1781, when Elkanah Cobb (1757-1837) married Jerusha Foster, and 1790, when Cobb is shown in his own Eastham household. Cobb, the son of Jonathan Cobb, had grown up in Harwich, and a family history suggests that after his marriage he "settled in Eastham." Accounts of his earlier life vary: an 1889 newspaper article stated that he had enlisted in the Navy at the age of sixteen and served in the Revolution; the family history states that he was a privateer during that conflict. Both accounts state that Cobb was captured and imprisoned but at some point managed to make his way back to Harwich.[1] Cobb is said to have built both whaling and fishing vessels, and his son Scotto commanded one of them: the Belvedere.

The 1790 census lists Elkanah Cobb in a household of six persons, and the names of abutters from that census through 1830 make clear that he was living in the same area throughout the period. He and his wife had one child, Elkanah Jr., in Brewster in 1781 and eight more in Eastham between 1783 and 1803—Scotto, Sally, Mercy, Reliance, Jerusha, Nathan, Mary, and Betsey. Elkanah Cobb died in 1837, and his 1833 will left his wife control of his real and personal estate while she lived and the right to sell whatever she needed for her support. He left to his eldest daughter Sally, the widow of master mariner John Cook, "the new

[1] "A Native of Eastham," *Yarmouth Register*, 7 September 1889, 2, states that Cobb was held for a time at Halifax and Dartmoor prisons; Philip L. Cobb, *A History of the Cobb Family* (Cleveland, 1907), 145-46, states that he was imprisoned "at Dartmoor prison, Halifax," but escaped with another man, "captured a boat," and came home. If he was taken prisoner during the Revolution he would have been held at Halifax, Nova Scotia, not at the infamous Dartmoor Prison in England, which was not built until the early 1800s and held American prisoners taken during the War of 1812.

end of the west part of my house together with the bed room adjoining the same" and part of the cellar as long as she was a widow, as well as one-fifth of the fruit growing in his orchard, one cow after his wife's death, enough hay to keep the cow, and a quarter of the wood that may be cut from his woodlands, and the rights to pass in the house, to "set her meal" in the "old chamber," and to pick up and remove any dry limbs or brush on his land. Cobb left the rest of his real estate to son Nathan Foster Cobb after his wife's death and divided his "indoor moveables" equally among his six daughters, all of them by then married.

Cobb's debts were sufficiently large that in 1840 his son and executor Scotto sold his father's cleared land and buildings, except what he had left to his daughter Sally, to Freeman Horton Jr. and Thomas M. Chipman. The deed specified the excluded portion as "all that part of the dwelling house built in the year 1823, adjoining the old house on the West, also the West bedroom adjoining said new part and attached to the old house," as well as enough land around this portion to keep house and the other rights her father had bequeathed to her.[2] The 1840 census shows the widowed Jerusha Cobb with three persons in her household and enumerated between Chipman and her son-in-law Zara Higgins at 345 Aspinet Road (EAS.108). Jerusha Cobb died in late December 1845, and in June 1846 Horton, then living in Boston, deeded his half of the Cobb property to Thomas Collins, his son-in-law. Three years later Chipman deeded his own half to Collins.[3]

Born in 1820 in Charlestown, Thomas Collins was a mariner who in 1845 married Louisa Horton, daughter of Freeman and Phebe Horton. The 1850 census shows him sharing the house with Sally Cobb Cook, then 64 years old and credited with $426 in real estate. Collins lived in the house with his wife and their two young sons, George and Thomas (later shown as Charles E. Collins). By 1860 the Collinses had three more children—Freeman, Louisa, and Mary—and by 1870 four more—Nathan B., Sylvanus P., Lewis H., and Ulysses Colfax. By 1880 those four youngest children were still in their parents' household, and Thomas Collins had turned from going to sea to fishing. The 1860 census estimated the value of his real property at $800, while by 1870 it was judged to be worth $679.

Louisa Horton Collins died in 1882, and her husband died five years later. In 1888 the eight Collins children, six of them living in Eastham, sold their parents' homestead, by then ten acres, to George H. Dill for $600.[4] Dill, born in Eastham in 1834, was the son of Joseph and Tamsen Dill. When he was fourteen, his master drowned in Wellfleet harbor when the boom from the vessel he worked on, the schooner Sharp Shooter, struck him and knocked him overboard. Dill's mother was widowed by the age of 40 and was living in this neighborhood with her nine children in 1850.[5] George H. Dill married Vermont native Martha Elmer in 1859 and was farming in Eastham by 1880. His wife died in November 1894, and he remained in Eastham until he died in 1903. Though no deed records it, somehow the 435 Aspinet Road property had become the property of their three children, who sold it in May 1894, six months before their mother died, for the same price their father had paid for it in 1888.[6] George H. Dill lived and farmed on nearby Cross Road in 1901.

The new owner of 435 Aspinet Road was Nehemiah Pierce Hopkins, whose family owned it for more than fifty years. Born in Eastham in 1875, Hopkins was the son of fisherman William M. Hopkins and his wife Melinda Pierce Hopkins, from Dennis. Nehemiah Hopkins was a shell fisherman, mariner, and "surfman," meaning that he worked for the United States Life-Saving Service near Nauset Light) during his working life. In 1894 he married Dennis native Gegneva Eldridge, and the 1900 census lists them with their son Harry and infant son Clifton, though not in this neighborhood; the Barnstable Patriot noted in November that year that Hopkins "has rented Weston Taylor's house for his family this winter," and he must have rented the Aspinet Road house for income at that time. In 1910 he and his wife and three sons were probably living at 435 Aspinet Road, though the 1930 census lists them on Campground Road, considerably south of this house; Hopkins is shown as owning property, but no other deed has been recorded for him for property other than 435 Aspinet Road.

In 1920 Hopkins was a shell fisherman, his son Harry was a third mate in the merchant marine, and son Clifton, then nineteen was a merchant seaman. In 1928 Geneva Eldridge Hopkins died, and by 1929 her widowed husband was working as a house painter and living on Aspinet Road. He is listed alone in his household in the 1930 census, and he died in Eastham in 1944. The

[2] Scotto Cobb, executor will Elkanah Cobb, to Freeman Horton Jr. and Thomas M. Chipman, 29 April 1840, BCD 25:308.
[3] Freeman Horton, Boston, to Thomas Collins, 16 June 1846, BCD 48:276; Thomas M. Chipman to Thomas Collins, 14 May 1849, BCD 39:516.
[4] Freeman A. Collins, George T. Collins, Sylvanus P. Collins, Lewis H. Collins, Ulysses C. Collins, Nathan B. Collins, all Eastham; Louise H. Ellis, Orleans, and Charles E. Collins, Winthrop, to George H. Dill, 8 June 1888, BCD 179:183.
[5] *Yarmouth Register*, 12 October 1848, 2.
[6] Eugene E. Dill, Templeton SC; Everett G. Dill, Boston; and Etta C. Clark, Eastham, to Nehemiah P. Hopkins, 7 May 1894, BCD 268:36.

Continuation sheet 2

administrator of his estate sold 435 Aspinet Road with its ten acres to Curtis E. and Florence H. Dorrie of Orleans in 1946, who divided the tract into six lots and sold 4.25 acres with the house and an outbuilding the same day to Wilfred J. and Mary C. Trahan.[7] Born in New Bedford in 1908, Wilfred Trahan was a master plumber and had moved to Wellfleet to start his own business by December 1935. He was single when he enlisted in Company F of the 101st Massachusetts Infantry in early March 1941, but he may not have served overseas; his 1942 draft registration indicates that he was living in Wellfleet. In 1945 he offered a ride to Mary C. Degnan, a native of Bayonne, New Jersey, who was vacationing in Wellfleet; they married the next year. Mary Trahan's obituary stated that the two bought "an old farmhouse in Eastham, which did not yet have electricity, indoor plumbing, or a telephone," and Mary became the business manager of Trahan Plumbing; she later worked at First National Bank in Wellfleet and was a founder of Nauset Workshop for special-needs children, an agency that is now Cape Abilities.[8] Wilfred Trahan was president of Barnstable County Master Plumbers Association in the 1950s and was some decades later charged with managing "the only public pump on Cape Cod that's working—the pump at Windmill Green" in Eastham, according to the *Barnstable Patriot*. "If you tell him there's a public pump in Wellfleet, he'll quickly remind you that it's dry."[9]

In 1983 the Trahans transferred the title to 435 Aspinet Road to Mary alone, and in March 2003, only weeks after Wilfred Trahan died, she sold the property to Russell H. Sandblom Jr. and his wife Jeanette. In 2005 they subdivided the 4.25-acre parcel and sold the house, its outbuildings, and 2.4 acres to Barbara Bailey Smith, trustee of Sachem Nominee Trust of Armonk, New York; Smith's estate was the owner of record in 2020.[10]

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[7] Edith M. Hopkins, administrator estate Nehemiah P. Hopkins, to Curtis E. and Florence H. Dorrie, Orleans, 22 March 1946, BCD 643:584; Curtis E. and Florence H. Dorrie to Wilfred J. and Mary C. Trahan, 22 July 1948, BCD 699:230. Edith M. Hopkins might have been Nehemiah P. Hopkins's second wife; the state vital records index indicates that he married in 1931.
[8] "Mary C. Trahan," *Barnstable Patriot*, 5 June 2009, B2.
[9] Ed Semprini, "Cape Comment," *Barnstable Patriot*, 20 July 2000, 4.
[10] Wilfred J. and Mary C. Trahan, Aspinet Road, to Mary C. Trahan, 5 October 1983, BCD 3896:237; Mary C. Trahan, 435 Aspinet Road, to Russell H. Sandblom Jr. and Jeanette Sandblom, 28 March 2003, BCD 16943:225; Russell H. Sandblom Jr. and Jeannette Sandblom to Barbara Bailey Smith, trustee Sachem Nominee Trust, Armonk NY, 22 December 2005, BCD 20630:4. The 435 Aspinet Road house is depicted on Lot A of "Plan of Land in Eastham, Mass. Property of Curtis E. Dorrie et ux," June 1948, BC 115:113, and on Lot A-3 of "Division of Land in Eastham, MA, Prepared for Russell H. Sandblom Jr. and Jeannette Sandblom," 3 June 2003, BCP 593:65.

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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES

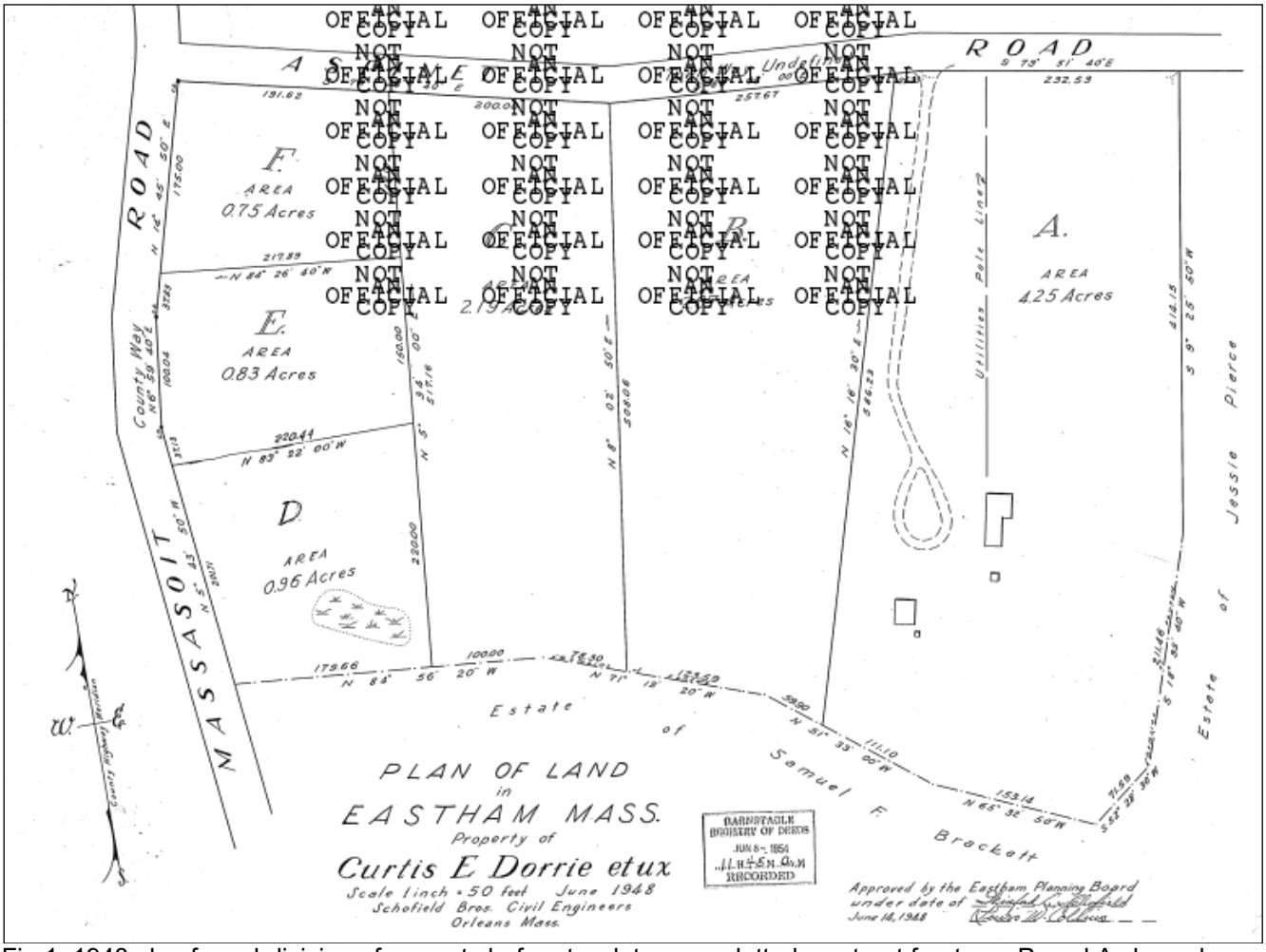

Fig.1: 1948 plan for subdivision of property before two lots were platted on street frontage. Parcel A shows house and three outbuildings (BCP 115:113).

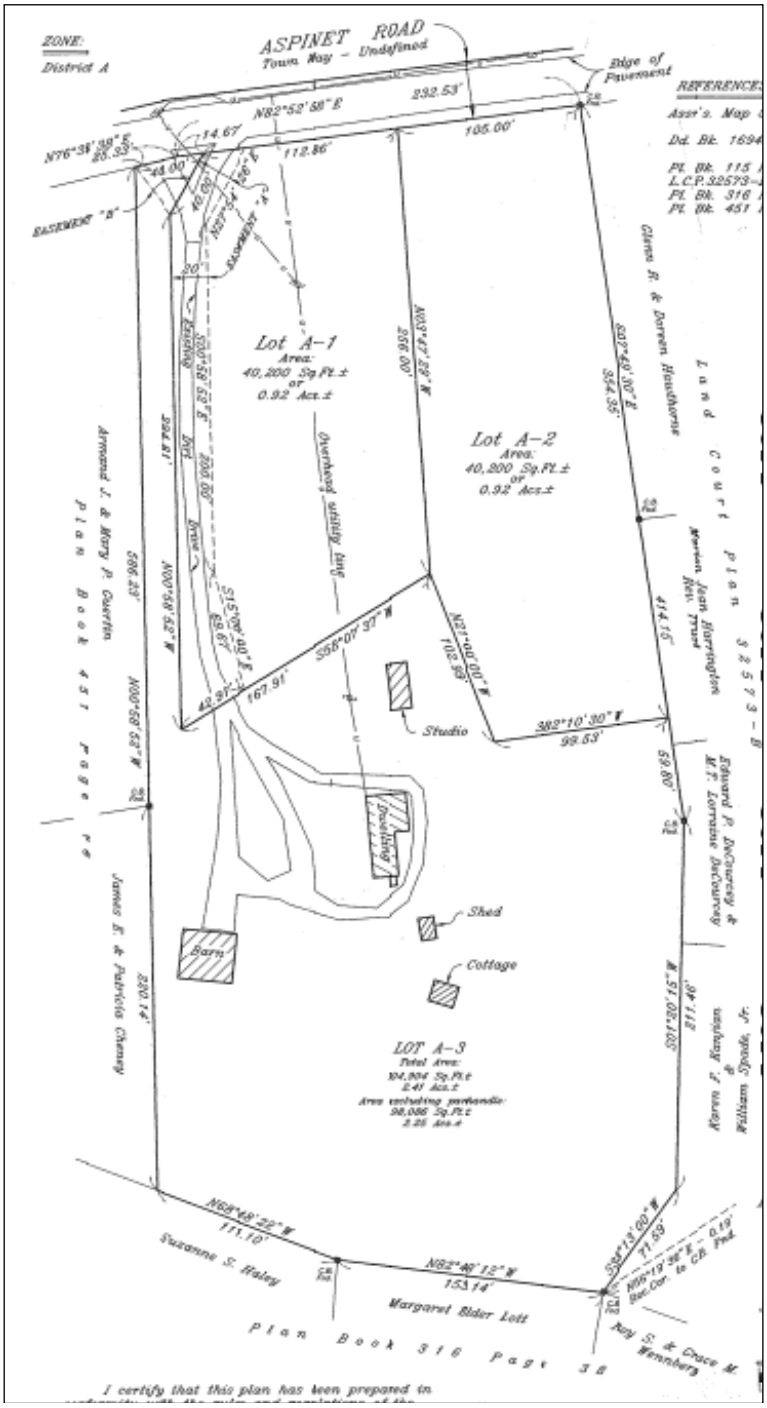

Fig.2: Plan of 2003 subdivision of 4.25-acre lot (BCP 593:65); Cottage and studio had by then been added to Lot A3

PHOTOGRAPHS

(credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2019 unless otherwise noted)

View of house from SW. Studio in background on right.

View of garage from NE.

View of cottage from north.

View of entry at street